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THE PURPOSES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SOME OF THE STATE-SUPPORTED LABORATORY SCHOOLS RUN BY TEACHER TRAINING INSTITUTIONS ARE CURRENTLY BEING CRITICIZED. DOUBTS ARE BEING RAISED ABOUT THE USEFULNESS TO FUTURE TEACHERS OF THESE CAMPUS-TIED, PREDOMINANTLY WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS SCHOOLS BECAUSE MANY EDUCATION STUDENTS WILL BE TEACHING DISADVANTAGED PUPILS IN GHETTO SCHOOLS. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "SOUTHERN EDUCATION REPORT," VOLUME 3, NUMBER 9, MAY 1968. (NH)

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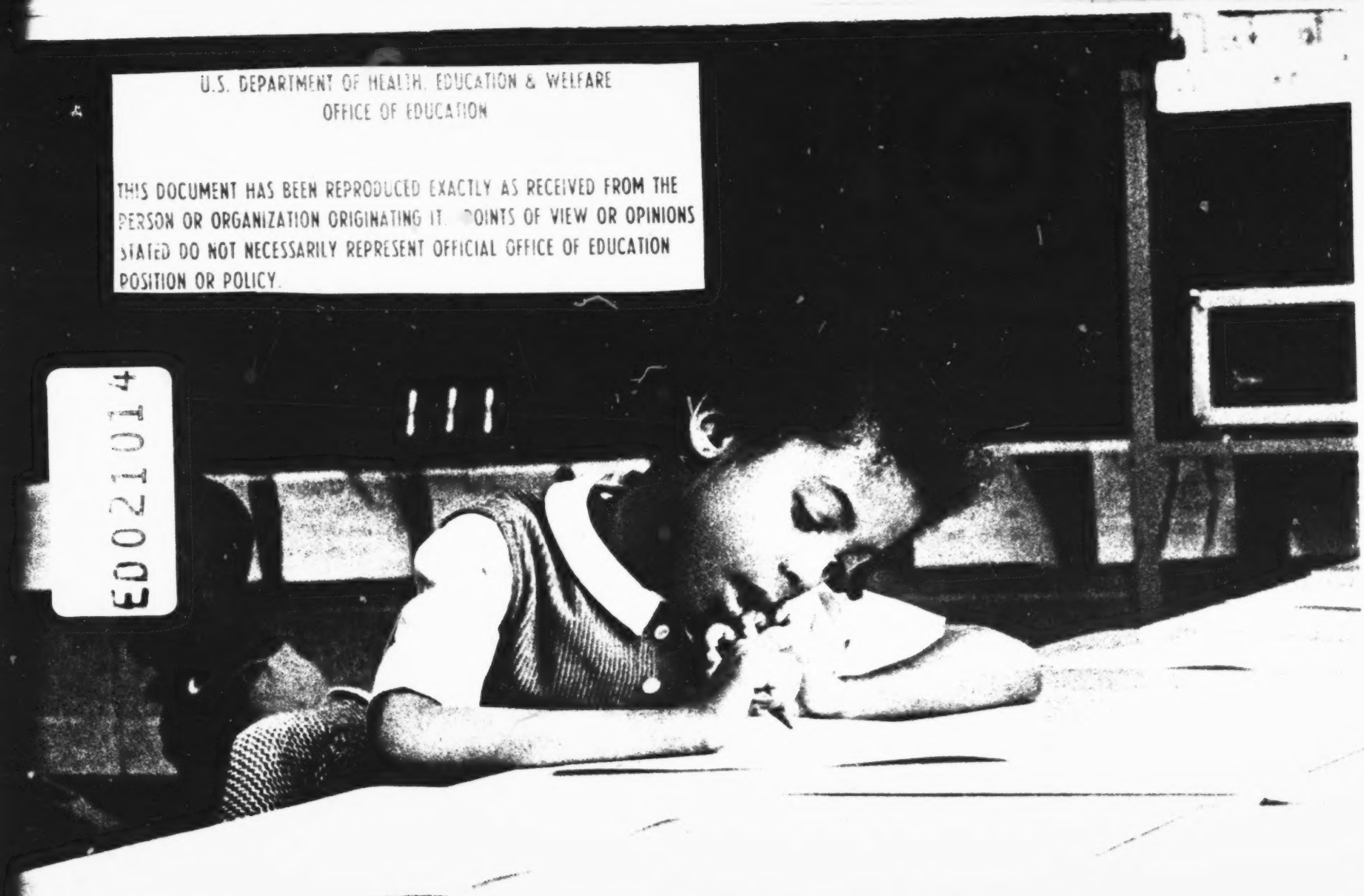


WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE LAB SCHOOLS?

UD 006 408

They've long been considered a window on the world of the classroom— but only a few provide a good look at the needs of the disadvantaged

By Clayton Braddock

TO THE TEACHER of teachers, the college or university laboratory school has always been a window on the world of the classroom, an on-stage seat in the theater of learning, a crucible for new ideas. Yet these lab schools, most of them of high quality, have become almost exclusively a domain for educating white, middle-class children, including many sons and daughters of college faculty members.

Their attractiveness to college-bound youth has caused these schools to be challenged as an effective testing ground for the benefit of the huge majority of American teachers and students. Most of them are not involved in the current attack on deprivation or in attempts to meet the needs of a wide range of student abilities. And there are signs that research, once the main function of the century-old institution, is diminishing in importance.

Although most of the 200 college- or university-controlled laboratory schools are vulnerable to this criticism of their usefulness and effectiveness, there is a small wave of change. A few colleges are moving away from the comparatively calm and predictable world of the campus-tied laboratory school to the challenge of grappling with one of the toughest problems of the day—the disadvantaged student, the child of the inner-city in particular. These institutions have thrust themselves, their faculty and their future school teachers into the battle of urban education, including the problems of the vast and decaying slums that surround the schools and often the college campus itself. They have made the ghetto school, rather than the college campus, their laboratory.

Among those in the new wave are the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, the University of California at Los Angeles, Indiana State University at Terre Haute, Antioch College in Ohio, the University of Minnesota, Temple University at Philadelphia, and Trenton State College in New Jersey. The projects at Temple and Trenton State are discussed in accompanying articles.

Some other laboratory schools have been created to help solve the problems of the disadvantaged student in the crowded cities. One of the most outstanding is Foster Elementary School in Evanston, Ill., a city that has eliminated racial segregation in a reorganization of its entire school system. But the innovative Foster School project is an effort of the Evanston school board. This article will deal with those projects which reflect the new and voluntary commitment by teacher-training institutions to the urban schools as the best place to train future teachers.

Maryland and Wisconsin are two states where the challenge to college-controlled laboratory schools has become a public issue.

In Maryland, it has been recommended that campus elementary schools at five teacher-training institutions be phased out, but a public outcry caused Gov. Spiro T. Agnew to restore $450,000 for the schools to the budget, an amount he had omitted earlier this year in an economy program. No decision on the laboratory schools has been made by the trustees of the Maryland State Colleges.

In his recommendation to the board of trustees, Dr, David D. Darland, a consultant to the board, said: "Under the existing conditions it is unrealistic to expect experimentation and research in these schools." In the light of current trends and research, together with the state's limited educational dollar, Dr. Darland found it "extremely difficult to justify the operation of the campus laboratory schools."

In a report made last September, Dr. Darland told the trustees: "Most prospective teachers will be teaching after graduation in the public schools. During their preparation for teaching, they should have a variety of experiences including exposure to the problems of the inner city, suburban and rural schools. It is difficult to simulate these problems in a single laboratory, and, therefore, prospective teachers should have the opportunity to learn in schools which present a variety of realistic situations."

In a preliminary report, Dr. Darland said of teacher training in general: "With few exceptions, practices in the state colleges epitomize traditional education which tends to reinforce the *status quo*, including segregation. This is not to imply criticism of personnel but rather to identify a condition. There is very little opportunity afforded those institutions for experimentation. Innovation requires a climate as well as resources—both human and material."

Towson State College, largest of the state's teacher-

training institutions, is located in Baltimore's northern suburbs but it is not far from the city line and it is on a major bus line leading to the downtown area. Of the 336 pupils enrolled, only 14 are classified as from poor families. Only two live in the inner city. While Baltimore's elementary school enrollment is 67 per cent Negro, only 17 of the Towson campus school's enrollment are Negroes. About 280 of the students are from Baltimore County, including 47 children of Towson faculty members; but only 62 of the youngsters are from the city proper.

Most laboratory school principals defend their own schools and the general institution of college-campus schools, especially those with a wide range of innovative programs and a high academic rating. In Maryland, parents quickly came to the defense of laboratory schools in that state when a shutdown was threatened. Some educators and political leaders also spoke out for maintaining the campus schools.

In a letter to the editor of the Baltimore *Afro-American*, Fred R. MacFadden Jr., chairman of the humanities department at Coppin State College, said: "The concept of higher learning in Maryland will become a mockery if that invaluable tool to higher education, the laboratory school, is disallowed to our state colleges."

U.S. Sen. Daniel Brewster of Maryland added his voice to the protest against elimination of the schools. In a letter to the state college trustee board, he said: "It is my feeling that these schools have served and are serving an extremely useful purpose."

Dr. Curtis Howd, executive director of the Laboratory School Administrators Association, defended the campus schools as the best place to test new ideas and methods.

"If you are trying to find a way to curriculum innovation, a way to test ideas and refine them in preparation for field testing them, you need a lab school. We have recognized this in science and all kinds of material things, but not with people." He said teaching training should be done in the public schools. But research must be done in the controlled environment found in laboratory schools.

Doubts about the usefulness of laboratory schools are also being expressed, however, in Wisconsin where nine campus schools are operated. The question was raised last year by the state co-ordinating committee for higher education as part of a 153-page report to the governor. An evaluation of the contributions such schools make to higher education is still being prepared.

Committee staff members questioned whether use of facilities worth $10 million and expenditure of $1.5 million in salaries to lab school faculty are justified. They suggested moving observation and practice teaching activities to the public schools. They also said the rising number of teacher trainees and the sharp changes in the training itself have made it desirable and necessary to transfer practice teaching into the public schools.

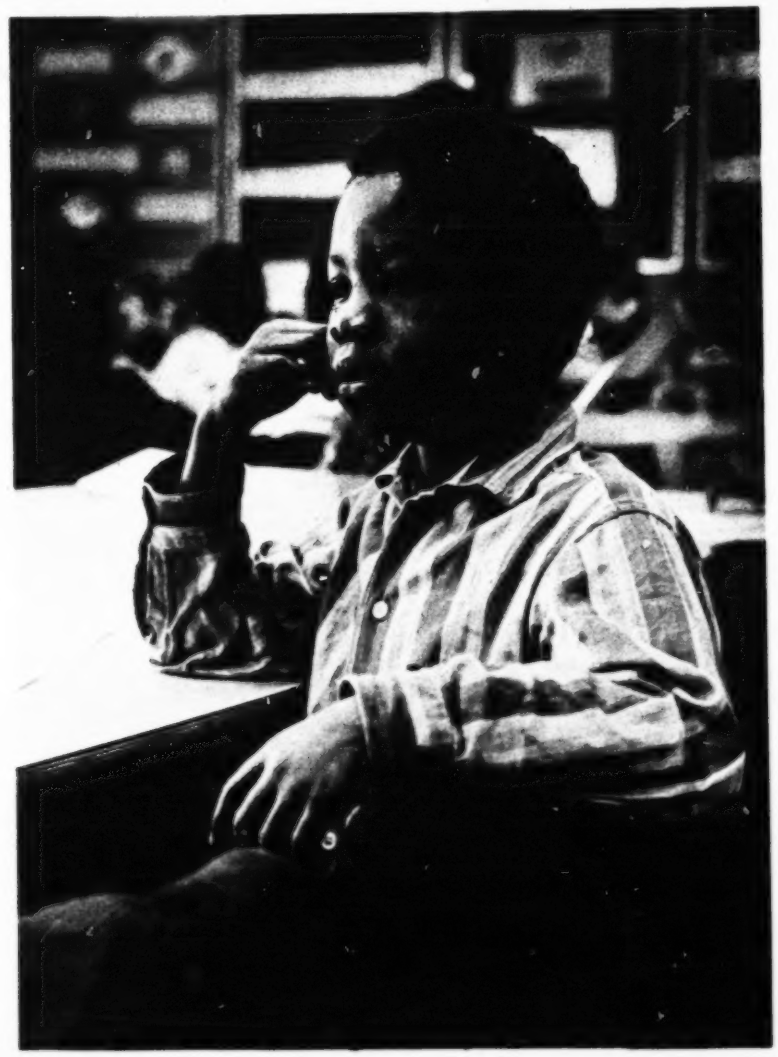
"While research activity must be encouraged," the report stated, "the [committee] staff is not aware of any definitive study which would indicate the irreplaceable contribution afforded by laboratory schools."

While the report was being studied last summer, the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee and the Milwaukee public schools launched a co-operative effort to determine and solve the problems of central-city students and schools. This project was set up in the all-Negro Twelfth Street School where UWM professors, teacher interns, psychologists and others are working alongside public-school teachers and administrators.

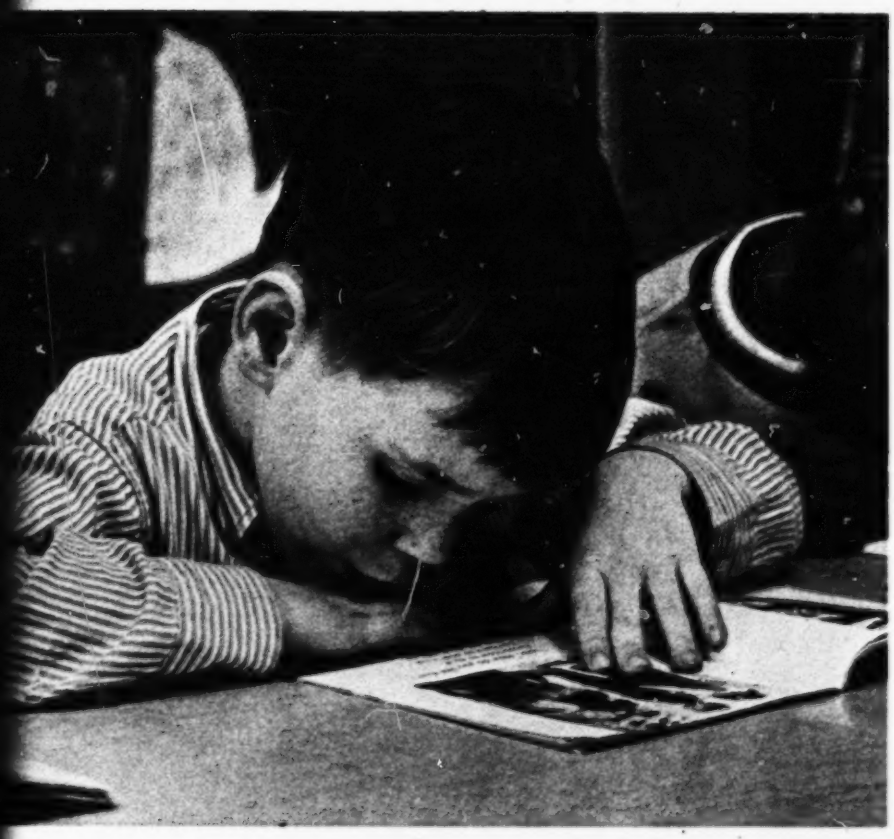
One plea for more of such involvement of the colleges in problem-area schools came in a speech earlier this year by Dr. Felix C. Robb, director of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and former president of George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tenn.

To members of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Dr. Robb said: "Despite notable exceptions, the chronic complaint persists that too many professors . . . spend little or no time in schools and are really out of touch with education's mainstream. To the extent that the allegation is correct, teacher education fails to employ the one means it has to make preparation programs real and relevant."

Dr. Robb said the day is not far away when private



A video-tape machine (above) is used to play back televised classroom sessions for student teachers in a critique of the teacher's technique and students' reaction. Groups of Trenton State College students in sound-proof rooms observe Grant School classes through one-way glass (below).



industry will contract to manage some schools. "If industrial corporations can enter into contracts with school boards for the conduct of schools, so can universities and colleges. The latter already advise schools on how to conduct their business, so presumably they have the know-how to execute as well as to consult."

His proposal to higher education was this: "To put colleges preparing teachers squarely into the deepest, most vital domestic issue that faces our nation, I propose that each member institution of AACTE seek to enter into a contract for the operation of a new type of laboratory school. This contract would involve management, not of the best school or even a mid-range school, but of one beset by problems.

"Why an underprivileged school? For one thing, school systems need less help in the management of learning for bright, culturally privileged children. The usefulness, and therefore the justification, to a doubting school board or citizenry would come from the chance to turn a difficult situation into a hopeful one."

Some colleges and universities have had contractual arrangements with school systems for years, but the schools have been typical of the campus school. They have merely contracted to operate a campus school as part of the public system while using it for some research and demonstration. But there are many obstacles in the path of going beyond this type of school. While lack of money and personnel to do the job would be an expected problem, a reluctance to try something new—on the part of the colleges and school officials—would present a formidable barrier.

Dr. Howd praised the many contributions which campus-school research has made to education, including such sweeping developments as new math. But he said there are many reasons why the college-based schools have not moved into the area of helping the disadvantaged, especially such a major change as management of problem-area schools. Among them, he said, are the insecurity of school superintendents, school systems' and universities' "inability to be flexible," and the "intellectual laziness" of both school and college administrators. Another obstacle to making the change is the inability of campus school teachers to work with disadvantaged children.

Dr. Howd is also director of the Burris School, the laboratory school at Ball State University at Muncie, Ind. The school once had a representative cross-section of poor and middle-class students, but its make-up now has shifted to mostly upper-class children. It would be a violation of Ball State's contract with the Muncie school system to change the student body or put the school into another area of the city. Even if the change were made, it would cause problems, Dr. Howd said.

"We would have to hire a staff of different people who know these kinds of children and know how to work with them. Our present faculty would be out," he said.

Laboratory schools also don't have much of an edge in the field of innovative education over the public schools, according to a 1967 survey of 119 college-controlled lab schools by Dr. Robert Blackmon, director of the Center for Laboratory School Studies at the University of Southwest Louisiana at Lafayette.

"There is not much going on except good programs

similar to those in the public schools," said Dr. Blackmon. His survey revealed that the 32 laboratory high schools averaged only two more innovations in practice than the public high schools surveyed. Innovations being used were typical, including televised instruction, programmed instruction, team teaching, nongraded classes, and teacher aides.

Laboratory schools should minimally provide a "better than average school program, an opportunity for student teaching, and opportunities for observation and participation by student teachers," Dr. Blackmon suggested. He said it is true that these functions are normally carried out by public schools. He was asked what this left to the laboratory school.

"It offers them an opportunity to become extinct" unless they change, he replied.

The P. K. Yonge Laboratory School on the campus of the University of Florida struck out on a course toward change 10 years ago, but now has returned to a more typical lab school operation. When new space was added in 1958, the school population was to triple in size—from 390 students to 960. To fill its classrooms, it brought in students from the Micanopy rural area surrounding Gainesville, site of the university.

But as seniors were graduated, new students were accepted only by application. "Gradually the disadvantaged students have applied less and less frequently," said Dr. J. B. Hodges, director of the school. Only about 5 to 10 per cent of the student body fits this description now. Breaking the mold of the lab school is difficult, Dr. Hodges said. "Almost anything you do threatens some of the local power structure." About half of the Yonge students are children of faculty members.

In an advertisement placed in student newspapers around the nation, two Philadelphia school officials nailed down in precise language what lies ahead for graduates who answer the city's recruiting call:

"I will continue to support teachers who are able to examine, in a mature way, the gut issues of our day—war, sex, race, drugs, poverty. If we divorce school subjects from the guts and hopes of human beings, we can expect students to find them gutless and hopeless."

Dr. Mark Shedd, superintendent of Philadelphia public schools

"The city is where the action is. It's where the challenge is. It's where we are facing the great moral and social issues of our day. If you want action, come teach in Philadelphia. If you don't, go teach in the suburbs."

Richardson Dilworth, president of the Philadelphia Board of Education

For a look at what Temple University is doing in Philadelphia, and at the work of Trenton State College in a nearby public school, see the next four pages.